

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AEC-11 DRC-01 FEA-02 ACDA-19 CIAE-00

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DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15

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R 070259Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3824

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL MEDAN

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5113

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, TECH, ID, AS

SUBJ: SUMITRO STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER

REF: JAKARTA 9660 (NOTAL)

1. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS REPORTS, INDONESIAN MINISTER OF RESEARCH, PROF. SUMITRO, SAID, DURING JULY 31 PRESS CONFERENCE, HE COULD NOT DENY POSSIBILITY THAT INDONESIA MIGHT DEVELOP ITS OWN NUCLEAR WEAPONRY. AFTER OBSERVING THAT ANY PROBLEMS SURROUNDING CONSTRUCTION OF A NUCLEAR REACTOR WOULD BE ECONOMICAL RATHER THAN TECHNICAL, SUMITRO WAS ASKED IF HE COULD GUARANTEE THAT INDONESIAN NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES ONLY. HE REPORTEDLY REPLIED, "I AM SPEAKING NOW - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN TEN YEARS TIME. I SUPPOSE I CAN SAY THAT WE CAN LEAVE THE POSSIBILITY OPEN FOR THE FUTURE."

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2. SUMITRO, WHO WAS VISITING AUSTRALIA FOR TALKS WITH SCIENCE MINISTER MORRISON AND OTHER GOA OFFICIALS INVOLVED WITH CIVIL SCIENCE, INDICATED GOI WILL BUILD 500 MEGAWATT NUCLEAR POWER REACTOR BY MID-1980'S. HE REPORTEDLY ALSO SAID THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF URANIUM RESERVES IN WEST IRIAN, BORNEO AND SUMATRA. AUSTRALIA PRESS ALSO GAVE HEAVY PLAY TO HIS COMMENT THAT GOI TAKES "DIM VIEW" OF ACCEPTANCE BY BHP, AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST PRIVATE CORPORATION, OF OIL SEARCH LEASE FROM SOUTH VIETNAM IN WATERS PARTLY CLAIMED BY INDONESIA (AMONG OTHERS).

3. EMBASSY COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS BEEN TRYING SINCE AUGUST 1 TO OBTAIN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE FROM INDONESIAN EMBASSY. AS OF AUGUST 6, TRANSCRIPT REPORTEDLY "STILL IN PREPARATION). DELAY COULD REFLECT GOI WISH (REFTEL) TO DOWNPLAY SUMITRO'S IMPLICATION THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS OPTION STILL OPEN. SUMITRO'S VISIT HERE WAS PURELY ORIENTED TOWARD CIVIL SCIENCES, AND HE APPARENTLY DID NOT MEET WITH DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE OR AUSTRALIAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES. WE WILL TRANSMIT RELEVANT PORTIONS OF TRANSCRIPT WHEN AND IF IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. MEANWHILE, WE SURMISE INDONESIAN EMBASSY HOPES PRESS CONFERENCE WILL BE FORGOTTEN, PARTICULARLY SINCE PRESS PHOTOS SHOWED SUMITRO SEATED BEFORE CLEARLY LEGIBLE SIGN (IN ENGLISH, ALTHOUGH LOCATED IN INDONESIAN CHANCERY) STATING: "O LORD, HELP ME TO KEEP MY BIG MOUTH SHUT UNTIL I KNOW WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT."
HARROP

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